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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 ADDIS ABABA 000286

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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER AND PRIME
MINISTER MELES DISCUSS KENYA, SUDAN, SOMALIA, AND ERITREA

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for Reasons: 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (C/NF) SUMMARY. On January 31, Assistant Secretary Frazer met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in a broad ranging 100 minute discussion on Kenya, Sudan, Somalia, Somaliland, and the Eritrean border. Also in attendance were Ambassador Yamamoto, Ambassador Courville, Sudan S/E Williamson, AF/SPG Director Lauren Landis, and notetakers. A/S Frazer opened by noting that Kenya is in a dangerous position, but that both President Kibaki and Raila Odinga have the potential to reach a settlement. Meles assessed that both sides were playing hardball and that the international community should place greater pressure on the opposition to reign in the violence. Meles said the key challenge in Sudan was to manage the North-South tension to avoid a meltdown in 2011. Regarding Somalia, Meles said that his government had developed a three track approach to be presented to President Yusuf on Yusuf's return from London. First, Meles said he hoped Ethiopian troops would withdraw from Somalia by summer to be replaced by African Union and newly trained Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces. Second, his government would reach out to the opposition within Somalia, and third, his government would reach out to the external opposition. On Somaliland, A/S Frazer and Meles agreed that they were not opposed to formal recognition, but that the African Union should take the lead. Meles said that Ethiopia would not drop out of the Algiers Peace Accord process and that sufficient changes had been made in UNSC resolution 1798, but he added that the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission's (EEBC) "virtual demarcation" decision should not be supported by the UN. Lastly, Meles said the United Nation's Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) could move in its entirety to Ethiopia if UNMEE was forced out of Eritrea. END SUMMARY.

KENYA IS IN A DANGEROUS POSITION

12. (C/NF) The meeting opened with an hour-long tour d'horizon on the repercussions of the Kenyan elections. Assistant Secretary Frazer began the discussion by noting that Kenya is a dangerous situation, and not just as a local or national problem, but also an international concern in light of the terrorist presence in Kenya that might seek to exploit the situation for their benefit. A/S Frazer said that she thinks both Kibaki and Odinga have the potential to

be reasonable and reach a settlement. A/S Frazer noted that the impact of the violence includes the loss of foreign business and investment, as well as the loss of the U.S. Peace Corps presence.

13. (C/NF) Meles said that he feels that both sides are playing hardball, and agreed that the situation is very dangerous. Meles said he was not sure what happened with the elections, but feels that Kibaki had been more accommodating in the beginning and has hardened his position as the situation has developed. A/S Frazer responded that the hardening of Kibaki's position is because of the post-election violence. Kibaki saw Odinga as responsible for the violence and felt that he could not trust Odinga, which caused him to harden his position. However, A/S Frazer said that Kibaki may be in a better position to bring stability to the situation. Kibaki has the power of the state behind him and is the only decision-maker on his side, while Odinga is one of five making the decisions. Odinga is probably the most reasonable of the five, but he is constrained by the hard-liners within his coalition. For example, William Ruto presents one face to the international community, but then turns and uses the radio to incite violence.

14. (C/NF) Meles opined that the opposition has been given a free ride; all the pressure has been on President Kibaki, not the opposition, even though they are responsible for most of the violence. This is giving the wrong message to the opposition. Kibaki's government, even if it has not made good decisions, has not incited violence. A/S Frazer noted that it is difficult to have leverage over the opposition, since the natural leverage of a government is over another government, rather than an opposition group. The United

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States is advocating a message of accountability on all sides, both government and opposition. A/S Frazer noted that some Kikuyu politicians are beginning to use the Mungiki militia to retaliate against the violence carried out by the opposition.

15. (C/NF) Meles noted that the opposition used the perception that the government had stolen the election to incite violence, but the main violence and victims of attacks were in the rural areas, not the capital. Meles said that "none of us spoke strongly enough against the ethnic cleansing" that was taking place in the rural areas. Now the "Kikuyu establishment" is using militias, such as the Mungiki, to retaliate in a "payback period." It has to be made clear to the Kikuyu establishment that ethnic cleansing is unacceptable as a response to the violence and that they cannot "fight fire with fire" or use militias to fight on their behalf.

16. (C/NF) A/S Frazer responded that the U.S. message is the same: ethnic cleansing is unacceptable and all sides must be held accountable for the violence. However, A/S Frazer noted that this is difficult because Odinga is an excellent communicator and very good at playing the victim and the media love the concept of the "good guy" versus the "bad guy." A/S Frazer said that she feels that the situation must be resolved quickly, particularly before the U.S. Congress and UN Security Council come back into session and begin to focus on Kenya, when the challenge will be to fight a battle against overreaction. A/S Frazer emphasized that the U.S. focus is on the process led by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and that the United States will follow Annan's direction. Following Annan's lead will also help keep the U.S. Congress from overreacting to the situation. The key is a negotiated political agreement, which will then influence the international response.

17. (C/NF) A/S Frazer said that it appears that Kibaki is trying to consolidate power, while Odinga wants to internationalize the conflict and maintain a state of crisis. There is a danger that the situation could lead to civil

war. A/S Frazer noted that Secretary Rice had recently spoken with Annan, and Annan mentioned that he had suggested to Kibaki that he bring the military out in a limited way, but that Kibaki demurred based on concerns regarding ethnic divisions within the military. If the ethnic divisions become more pronounced because of the violence, A/S Frazer expressed her concern that it could lead to a coup d'etat. The Kikuyu response could lead to civil war, as many Kikuyu fundamentally don't believe that the election was stolen and are incensed by the violence that the opposition is encouraging.

18. (C/NF) Unfortunately, Meles responded, the international reaction thus far does not inspire moderation. The EU response of cutting off assistance gives the message that Kibaki is the "bad guy" and does not push Odinga or his group to moderate their positions. While the military may not quit, they will not be monolithically behind Kibaki, which is why some Kikuyu are turning to the militia instead. The "single-minded focus on Kibaki" is not productive for a peaceful settlement and will only entrench hard-liners on both sides. Meles said that a more balanced approach is needed to encourage a peaceful process.

19. (C/NF) A/S Frazer said that she personally believes that Kibaki could change the dynamics single-handedly overnight with a public address that is not defensive but a true "Mandela moment." Until this point, Kibaki has been "stage managing" his presidency, but needs to be more substantive in his messages to the people. Kibaki must also control his supporters, some of whom have tried to undermine his positive efforts towards compromise. A/S Frazer noted that the opposition prefers the term coalition to government of national unity, which they already tried in the past and did not work. A/S Frazer also opined that the government could improve the situation by lifting the restrictions on the media and asked the media to behave responsibly, which could have the effect of making the opposition look very small in comparison.

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110. (C/NF) Meles agreed that Kibaki is not violent by nature, but has only been going after the foot soldiers, not the organizers of the violence on the Kikuyu side. Meles believes this is because Kibaki can only rely on a "100 percent Kikuyu institution" that includes the "bosses" that have organized the Kikuyu-led violence. This puts Kibaki into a dangerous situation if he reaches out to the opposition without guarantees that they will respond positively. A/S Frazer responded by noting that Odinga's heart is not in violence and would be likely to accept a compromise. However, it is not clear what kind of deal he might agree to take. But by reaching out, A/S Frazer said, Kibaki could place the media pressure on Odinga to agree, rather than keep it on himself.

111. (C/NF) Meles said that it would be helpful for the United States, in coordination with the EU, to speak to both the opposition and key Kikuyu figures in clear terms regarding accountability for the violence. Meles said that he planned to meet with Kibaki at the AU Summit during an IGAD meeting on the margins of the Summit. Meles emphasized Ethiopia's direct stake in the situation in Kenya and that Ethiopia "cannot sit idly by" or afford further instability in Kenya that could impact the broader region. While "we should not pour oil on fire, we must understand where Kibaki is coming from, and that he has to be seen to defend Kikuyu interests" and keep his Kikuyu base. Meles promised to follow-up via Ambassador Yamamoto following the IGAD meeting.

SUDAN TO REMAIN TENSE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE

112. (C/NF) Meles said that the key challenge in Sudan was

to manage the tension between the North and South through 2011 to avoid a meltdown. Meles was sympathetic to the ongoing situation in Sudan, both Darfur and implementation of the CPA, but said he thought that the CPA was the more complicated issue. He admitted that Ethiopia's primary concern was the CPA, particularly given its shared border with Sudan, which touches both North and South. A/S Frazer relayed that recent negative rhetoric towards the US from the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) is unhelpful, specifically talk of declaring the Charge d'Affaires persona non grata. Meles agreed it was unhelpful, but pointed out that the government in Khartoum is "not a one man show" and he did not think these threats were serious. Frazer continued that she was also extremely concerned about information that the Government of Sudan is considering kicking out the vital Pacific Architects and Engineers contractors responsible for building the peacekeeper building camps; without which UNAMID would be crippled. Meles opined that the NCP was posturing a bit and that they would not push too far.

NEW ETHIOPIAN OPTIONS FOR SOMALIA

¶13. (C/NF) On Somalia, Meles said that his government "had been reviewing our options," and will present its recommendations to President Abdullahi Yusuf when he passes through Addis on his return from London. Meles said that he is hoping to withdraw most of our troops, if not all of them, by the summer. Meles was hopeful that additional forces from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) would be on the ground by the time of Ethiopia's withdrawal, including the remaining Burundian forces and the Nigerian battalion, and that the forces from the TFG that had been trained by Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda would be able to play a greater role in maintaining security. At this point, the Ethiopian forces will withdraw to the Ethiopian side of the border, where they would be ready to respond quickly should something happen, but the combined TFG and AMISOM forces would be responsible for maintaining security. Meles noted that some elements within the TFG were mistakenly counting on an indefinite Ethiopian presence and said that he hoped that Ethiopia's withdrawal would help those elements within the TFG become more flexible.

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¶14. (C/NF) At the same time, Ethiopia will pursue a second track of continuing to reach out to the opposition and helping to make the TFG "more effective." Noting the complex clan balances in the Mogadishu and Kismaayo areas, Meles said that he was encouraging the TFG to form regional governments in both areas to help bring greater stability and help balance clan sensitivities. Meles said that he was continuing to engage with the Hawiye, particularly the Habir Gedir sub-clan, and that he was pleased that Ahmed Abdisalam Adan (Hawiye/Habir Gedir/Ayr) had been brought into the new TFG Cabinet as one of the Deputy Prime Ministers. In response to a question from A/S Frazer, Meles indicated that it may be possible for the TFG to dismiss Mogadishu Mayor Mohamed Dheere (Hawiye/Abgal). However, Meles seemed to be more concerned regarding the situation in Kismaayo, where the problems were within the Darood clan rather than the Hawiye. (Comment: While President Yusuf is from the Darood/Mijerteen sub-clan, the Darood presence in Kismaayo is largely from the Darood/Marehan sub-clan. End Comment.)

¶15. (C/NF) Meles also noted that his government had been reaching out to the external opposition based in Asmara. Meles opined that the opposition seemed uncomfortable with the current situation and that it was now possible to bring the opposition back into a political process. Saudi Arabia could also play a helpful role in persuading some of the former members of the Council of Islamic Courts to come back into a political process, according to Meles. At the same

time, said Meles, there are now divisions within the Shabaab, and "Aweys may no longer be in control" of the movement. Meles emphasized the importance of isolating the Shabaab, building the capacity of the TFG, and reaching out to the opposition and key stakeholders. Meles said that he had discussed parts of this strategy with TFG Prime Minister Nur "Adde" Hassan Hussein, but that they were waiting to discuss the military components with President Yusuf first given his sensitivities on military arrangements.

¶16. (C/NF) A/S Frazer responded that this sounded like a good plan, but one that required lots of work both with AMISOM and the TFG. A/S Frazer noted that Ugandan President Museveni had offered--pending discussions with his officials at home--to deploy an additional two battalions under AMISOM if the U.S. could provide financial support, which we would try to do. Meles responded that this would be very helpful and said that he would speak to Museveni about this possibility. Meles also noted the importance of training an effective Somali police force and that he was hoping to train more Somali police if financial support could be identified. A/S Frazer responded that we would see if we could identify any funds to support this effort.

US IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH SOMALILAND

¶17. (C/NF) Turning to Somaliland, A/S Frazer noted the recent visit of Somaliland President Dahir Rayale Kahin to Washington. While some may interpret this visit as a sign that the U.S. was on the verge of formal recognition, A/S Frazer clarified that the United States was not getting ready to recognize Somaliland, but believed that it was important to engage with them to ensure regional stability. At the same time, A/S Frazer said that the United States would not be opposed to Somaliland independence if it should happen within an AU context. A/S Frazer said that she had raised the issue with AU Chairperson Alpha Oumar Konare, who seemed to be placing unrealistic conditions for addressing the Somaliland issue. The first was that Somaliland negotiate with the government in Mogadishu, either the TFG or its successor, regarding its independence, and the second was that there be a regional consensus on Somaliland's status, neither of which are likely to happen or result in any clear decisions.

¶18. (C/NF) Meles said that Ethiopia's position on Somaliland was the same as that of the United States, but that the political situation within the AU was not yet ripe for addressing the Somaliland issue. Meles said that he met with

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Rayale upon his return from Washington and urged him to write to the AU requesting that they identify a timeframe for a discussion on the Somaliland issue. However, Rayale "messed things up" by essentially re-sending his previous letter requesting recognition and membership in the AU, rather than asking for a timeframe for a discussion on Somaliland. Meles said that, if Somaliland had taken the route that he suggested, it would have been likely that the issue could have been addressed soon. However, if the elections for a new AU Chairperson take place during the AU Summit, Meles said that the next chairperson is unlikely to be as positive towards Somaliland as Konare, which will only further delay any discussion of Somaliland.

¶19. (C/NF) Meles also noted the complications of the current political situation inside Somaliland with the delays in preparations for the municipal and presidential elections. While avoiding any specifics, Meles said that the clan dynamics in Somaliland were out of balance, but that it was important to convey to Rayale that he could not rely on "outside forces" to tilt the balance in his favor. Even if Ethiopia tried to intervene on Rayale's behalf, Meles said, the effort would fail.

ETHIOPIA TO REMAIN ENGAGED IN ALGIERS PROCESS

¶20. (C/NF) Prime Minister Meles told A/S Frazer and Ambassador that Ethiopia would not drop out of the Algiers Peace Accord process. Sufficient changes had been made in the UNSC resolution 1798 extending UNMEE operations by six months to allow Ethiopia to remain in the process. Meles added that the EEBC's "virtual demarcation" decision of November 2006 was not in accordance with the Algiers process and should not be supported or affirmed by the U.N. Meles has told the international community in the past that the border is symptomatic of deeper bilateral problems between Ethiopia and Eritrea and that the way forward is through direct dialogue between Eritrea and Ethiopia on the fundamental differences that divide the countries and which gave rise to the border conflict before demarcation can be peacefully implemented. Without this step, there can be no lasting peace between the two countries.

¶21. (C/NF) A/S Frazer asked what would have been the consequences of dropping out of the Algiers Agreement. Meles noted that had Ethiopia dropped out of the Algiers Process, it would not have changed Ethiopia's position to remain committed to avoiding conflict with Eritrea. Dropping out would have consolidated hard-liners within his own government who advocate a tougher line with Eritrea and the U.N., and confused the Eritreans. Meles opined that there has been no renewed border war because Eritrean citizens believe Ethiopia has no design to take over Eritrea. This has induced Eritreans to flee to Sudan and Ethiopia to escape the harsh conditions and mandatory national service in Eritrea. Dropping out of the process could have sent a confusing message to Eritrea and raised tensions along the border.

¶22. (C/NF) In consultations with the UN Secretary General's office, Meles said Ethiopia agreed to welcome and host the entire UNMEE force should Eritrea continue with its fuel restrictions and limitations on UNMEE operations. This would be for the short term and that over a longer period, Ethiopia expected to see UNMEE transition into an observer mission and that they could operate entirely from the Ethiopia side.

¶23. (U) A/S Frazer cleared this cable.
YAMAMOTO